A C A D E M I A R O M Â N Ă

ANUARUL
INSTITUTULUI DE CERCETĂRI SOCIO-UMANE „GHEORGHE ŞINCAI”

XXVIII
TÂRGU MUREŞ

2025

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ISSN 1454 – 5284
Editura Academiei Române

ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

ANUARUL INSTITUTULUI DE CERCETĂRI SOCIO-UMANE „GHEORGHE ŞINCAI”

XXVIII/2025

……

I. IDENTITĂȚI MEDIEVALE

Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, *Încă un rege: Alfonso al V-lea de Aragon şi elitele Regatului Ungariei în septembrie 1444*.....5

II. POLITICĂ ȘI CULTURĂ ÎN PERIOADA INTERBELICĂ

Florin Anghel, *Războaiele memoriei în totalitarism. Polonia şi masacrul de la Katyn în presa regimului Ion Antonescu (aprilie-mai 1943)*.....30

Gabriel Moisa, *Considerații asupra implicării elitei orădene împotriva revizionismului promovat de Ungaria horthistă în perioada interbelică*.....62

Sonia D. Andraș, *Nurse Between the Lines: Romanian Female Rockefeller Foundation Fellows in Medical Professions in-between Innovation and Suppression*.....83

Corina Mașca, *Analiza structurii elitei comuniste din județul Mureș în 1944-1948: o perspectivă socio-demografică*.....119

Iulian Boldea, *N. Steinhardt and Nicolae Balotă. Through the Lenses of Trauma and Autobiography*.....147

Răzvan Mihai Neagu, *Politică și administrație în Turda interbelică. Notarul Vasile Meșter (1875-1965), om politic, prefect și senator.....157*

Tatiana Scurtu, *Elita educațională a județelor Ciuc, Odorhei și Trei Scaune în perioada interbelică: portrete, contribuții, moșteniri*.....178

Daniela Curelea, Dragoș Lucian Curelea, *Portretul unui ofițer de excepție: Dumitru Petrescu Tocineanu. Grade, distincții, onoruri, decorații, apartenențe (1910-1943)*.....205

Silvia Popovici, *The Enduring Legacy of Karl Kurt Klein: Contributions to the "Mihai Eminescu" Central University Library Iași and to the Romanian University Education in the Interwar Period*.....226

Narcis Martiniuc, *Aspecte ale activității lui Aloisie Tăutu în Eparhia greco-catolică de Oradea reflectate în ziarul „Vestitorul"*.....242

III. MISCELLANEA

Diana Ețco, *Configurația școlilor primare publice în cadrul sistemului de învățământ din Basarabia. Studiu comparativ (a II-a jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea)*.....268

Margareta-Tabita Moldovan (Știr), *Ioachim Mureșanu, un precursor al spiritului intelectual interbelic*.....301

Antoniu-Ioan Berar, Marcela Berar, *Inteligența română din Transilvania și Banat. Rolul acesteia în sprijinirea comunităților locale (1880–1918)*.....*320*

Recenzii și note de lectură.....337

DOI:10.59277/ICSUGh.Sincai.28.04

NURSE BETWEEN THE LINES: ROMANIAN FEMALE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION FELLOWS IN MEDICAL PROFESSIONS IN-BETWEEN INNOVATION AND SUPPRESSION

Sonia D. Andraș*

Abstract: *This paper explores the role of nurses with specialized training in Romania in the inter- and post-war period until the Communist takeover in 1948. It focuses on the Rockefeller Foundation's support for encouraging modern nursing education in the interwar period and beyond, until the curtailing of academic relations. The research highlights how prejudices related to women's abilities and role in medical science and practice have informed the perception of healthcare by decision-making authorities in Romania. It examines the international support for modern medical education and the response of the Romanian authorities to these initiatives, analysing the position of nurses as professionals and gender relations in this historical framework. This paper applies an interdisciplinary approach in the assessment of fellowship records, reports, diaries and pertinent observations from Rockefeller Foundation representatives. The research is centred around the relationship between the concepts of health, beauty and fashion used in propaganda regarding women's roles. Primary sources include Romanian publications between 1920 and 1948 and documents from Rockefeller Foundation representatives. The aim is to follow and deepen the understanding of the professional trajectory of Romanian female medical professionals with Rockefeller Foundation support. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of gender studies throughout history in Romania and provides a theoretical and practical basis for future research in the field of medical and related sciences.*

Keywords: *Rockefeller Foundation; nursing; Romania; women; interwar period; Second World War; Stalinisation.*

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Introduction

This paper examines the professionalisation of Romanian nurses, emphasising the support from the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in the 1920s and 1930s for advancing modern nursing education, and its influence extending into the 1940s. The research addresses misconceptions about women's roles in peacetime and wartime medicine, amid external efforts to establish an effective nursing system in interwar Romania and the response of local authorities. The analysis draws on archival sources reviewed until August 2025 and Romanian primary and secondary materials to examine women's work in interwar Romania. It highlights their impact and representation in the context of women's emancipation while challenging stereotypes about their intellectual and professional abilities. As the question crosses disciplines, including history, sociology, medicine and cultural studies, the research will use a transdisciplinary approach, linking archival research to sociological and semiotic analysis of primary sources[1]. This paper belongs to a larger research on women's fashion in interwar Romania, as an interdisciplinary link between craft, art, society, economy, culture, and in this context, health and beauty understood as aesthetic, physical and medical markers, connecting personal and public health efforts to darker nuances of eugenics and biopolitics. The irony of RF support lies in its significant investment in Romania's medical and sociological fields, only for the country to become an enemy after Ion Antonescu declared war on the U.S. following Pearl Harbor. Later, when the Communists took over, they appropriated these achievements as their own, erasing references to the RF legacy while still using its resources.

A deeper analysis of gendered perception of professional output reveals that the widespread devaluation of occupations typically associated with women, along with the trivialization of subjects such as fashion, health and beauty, leads the Romanian state to underestimate the importance of nursing. Hygiene became a national focus, and eugenics

[1] Lisa R. Lattuca, "Creating Interdisciplinarity: Grounded Definitions from College and University Faculty", *History of Intellectual Culture* 3, no. 1 (2003): (1–20) 6.

was introduced to the general public as promoting public cleanliness, reproductive control, and physical fitness[2]. Beauty and femininity were essential for societal progress, viewing coquetry as beneficial for racial improvement[3], for which women should constantly strive[4]. The overt aim informed by eugenics and biopolitics was to establish ideological cohesion and rationalise state intervention in personal behaviour and reproductive roles[5]. Advice literature emphasised "eugenic beauty", highlighting health, charm, and modesty against overt sensuality[6]. Seemingly innocent at first glance, such texts addressed the relationship between eugenics and women's morality as personal and national concerns, illustrating the extensive effect of eugenic propaganda and social engineering efforts targeting the two areas where women held significant roles beyond education and secretaryship, nursing and fashion. As beauty was now a health issue, its pursuit fell within the jurisdiction of the emerging field of nursing education.

The emergence of Greater Romania required the establishment of a unified national identity, as Romanian identity was still evolving. A key aspect of this endeavour was the concept of the ideal woman, who was viewed as an ambassador of beauty. After the First World War, Romania's national identity shifted from an ethno-linguistic focus to an ethno-nationalist perspective, despite the widespread racism of the time[7]. This pursuit of clarifying national identity could only be achieved with external assistance, relying on Wilsonian principles of national determination and support from charitable organisations like the RF. This perspective informed achieving and maintaining health, social services and the availability of skilled personnel. It also contributed to

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[2] Iuliu Moldovan, *Igiena națiunii* (Cluj: Institutul de Igienă și Igienă Socială, Subsecția Eugenică și Biopolitică a Astrei, 1925).

[3] Aurel Voina, *Îngrijirea tenului* (Bucharest: Cugetarea - Georgescu Delafras, 1938).

[4] Voina, *Igiena - pentru clasa a VIII-a secundară de băieți și fete*, 3rd ed. (Bucharest: Cugetarea – Georgescu Delafras, 1941), 3–4, 202.

[5] Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15–16, 76.

[6] Mihail Celerianu, "Frumusețe și spirit", *Jurnalul Doamnei*, December 1, 1938.

[7] Maria Bucur, "Romania", in *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919 - 45*, ed. Kevin Passmore (Pittsburgh/Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 61–3.

the interwar popularity of eugenics, population control, and personal hygiene, from health and sanitation to the darkest aspects of biopolitics and population control. Right-wing movements, including militant groups and those promoting eugenics, have emphasised racial purity under the guise of advocating for public health rooted in long-standing ideas of racial, and in Romania's case, ethnic purity. The discussion regarding the Nazi regime's relationship with women and their involvement in the atrocities could also be relevant to Romanian nurses. In the late 1980s, Claudia Koonz sought to highlight women's lives and portray them as genuine heroines[8]. Gisela Bock argued that Nazi institutions were deleterious to women's assertion[9]. Kevin Passmore noted that while Koonz's argument implied that women contributed to the atrocities of Hitler's regime, both sides overlooked the distinction between sex and gender, assuming that gender roles were natural and fixed. As Grant T. Harward noted, Second World War nurses were often seen as either charity workers or auxiliary personnel and the urgent need for capable, determined young women to join the Romanian Army's auxiliary medical service[10]. Amid the rise of far-right autocracy in Romania and alliance with Nazi Germany, RF nursing fellows' possible involvement in the Romanian campaigns linked to Hitler's Operation Barbarossa is another avenue of research. This also highlights the disconnect between urban nursing supported by the RF, centred around Bucharest, Iași, and Cluj. Analysing the early history of institutionalised nursing education in Romania necessitates a careful and critical examination of the complex and interconnected factors that cannot survive in isolation.

The American three-year nursing education model, promoted worldwide by the RF, began to take root in Romania in the age of the flapper or a Romanian context, the rebellious 'modern girl', leading to the Great Depression and the birth of the ideologically-fashioned 'new

[8] Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987).

[9] Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986). Bock, "Die Frauen und de Nationalsozialismus: Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Claudia Koonz", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, no. 15 (1989): 573–79.

[10] Grant T. Harward, *Romania's Holy War: Soldiers, Motivation, and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), 230–1.

woman'[11]. This new approach aimed to replace the older, traditional models, where prospective nurses attended only three to four months of classes before directly starting their practice[12]. Health became intricately linked to beauty standards, emphasising the expectation that the ideal woman, as eugenicists repeated on every occasion, should be perfect in body, mind, and soul. The pursuit of health transcended mere medical concerns, becoming intertwined with societal perceptions of beauty and morality. Less overtly, female Rockefeller fellows served as ambassadors of Romanian modernity and catalysts for change upon their return, becoming fully certified practitioners in their fields. By the summer of 1941, it became clear that there were far too few nurses available to serve during the war. With the RF program ending, the Red Cross took on the responsibility of recruitment, but they struggled to attract enough candidates. In less than a decade, all RF efforts would be foiled by Romania's successive extreme shifts, from joining the Axis to its postwar Stalinisation.

The Great Potential

The RF was established to advance global well-being through initiatives in public health and medical education, culminating in 1916 with the establishment of the School of Hygiene and Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. In the interwar era, the Foundation redirected its efforts toward Eastern Europe, with a particular focus on Romania[13]. Its official relationship with Romania began towards the mid-1920s, but scouting in Romania had been pursued since at least 1922[14]. By 1924, a

[11] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris': Fashion in Interwar Bucharest* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2024), 100–1, http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350294486.

[12] Ecaterina Gulie, "The History of Nursing in Romania", *Nursing History Review* 19, no. 1 (2011): (175–78) 175, https://doi.org/10.1891/1062-8061.19.175.

[13] Cornel Sigmirean and Carmen Andraș, "Negocieri Academice Româno-Americane: Sabin Manuilă în Arhivele Fundației Rockefeller," *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane »Gheorghe Șincai« al Academiei Române* 25 (April 1, 2022): (191–210) 192, https://doi.org/10.59277/icsugh.sincai.25.15.

[14] Grigore T. Popa, "Fundația Rockefeller în slujba omenirii", *Universul Literar* 63, no. 9 (1945): (6–8) 6.

total of 864 scholarships were awarded across thirty-three countries, with thirteen of these going to Romanian scholars. The Division of Medical Education (DME) granted 98 scholarships to international researchers. Romania received seven of these in 1924, which increased to seventeen by 1925 and slightly decreased to fifteen in 1926, covering all fields of study. RF funded scientific and health scholarships from 1917 to 1950. In Romania, this support was active from 1923 to 1940 and benefited seventy-one fellows in areas such as public health, medical assistance, expertise, and biochemistry[15]. The report highlighted that RF supported multiple nursing and public health schools in Europe materially and educationally, including the University of Lyon's School of Nursing, the University of Cracow's School of Public Health, the University of Debrecen's School of Nursing, the Cluj School for Public Health Nurses, nursing schools in Warsaw and Budapest, equipment for Cracow and establishing a nurses' residence and school at University College Hospital in London and Yale School of Nursing[16]. That year, RF awarded nursing fellowships for advanced training in supervisory and administrative public health roles. Thirty-six fellows were selected from ten countries, with Romania contributing five, matching Hungary and ranking second only to Siam (now Thailand)[17].

While interest in eugenics was minimal in pre-1918 Romania, it began to grow during the interwar period as ideas from Charles Darwin and Francis Galton gained popularity[18]. After the First World War, eugenics became closely intertwined with political and social actions, leading to significant health and hygiene initiatives worldwide that were centred around a core biopolitical agenda. The so-called 'eugenic culture' permeated interwar Romanian social structures and practices[19], leading to the production of numerous beauty and health manuals, advertisements, and magazines. This phenomenon was not accidental. Its promoters and ideologues intended explicitly for their ideas to spread as

[15] Sigmirean and C. Andraș, "Negocieri Academice Româno-Americane", 194–5.
[16] *Annual Report. 1929*, "Nursing Education. Aids to Schools of Nursing" (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1929), 197–8.
[17] Ibid, 201–2.
[18] Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 19–29.
[19] Ibid, 3.

widely as possible on a personal and social level[20]. Between 1929 and 1933, the popularity of beauty contests in Romania highlighted the commercialisation of beauty, presenting the ideal woman as hygienic and pure in her demeanour, attire, and physique. But this perfection was not only in terms of aspect and health. Its darker undertones aimed to 'soften' the tone of eugenic conceptions of social and racial purity, which were used as the backbone of misogynistic, racist and ideological violence, both as physical and psychological acts. Those seeking to deepen their understanding of fashion as practice and beauty as health were offered a wealth of aesthetic and theoretical insights beyond technical details. Predominantly male theorists emphasised that the harmony between colours and their alignment with physical traits should take precedence over fleeting trends. Readers found comprehensive guides that promoted matching colours with skin and hair tones and selecting complementary hats. In contrast, related magazines aimed at women, such as *Trup și Suflet (Body and Soul),* led by medical historian, doctor, and chronicler of Bucharest, Nicolae Vătămanu, and *Tribuna Femeii (The Woman's Tribune)*. Such publications often lacked nuance, presenting extreme viewpoints through a eugenic lens influenced by social and ethnic hygiene. They shaped discussions about urban women's lives and highlighted the connections between interwar aesthetics, ideology, culture, and daily life. RF saw aid for the professionalisation of nursing in postwar Europe as an essential connection between medicine and public health. By 1930, nine European countries collaborated on nursing education and public health initiatives. Romania emerged as a priority for the Foundation's nursing development agenda. To enhance core nursing education theory, RF aimed to establish institutions outside of the post-war German "motherhouse" systems and those in other European countries. Its efforts to promote secularisation, standardisation, and autonomy in nursing included providing lesson ideas, teaching materials, equipment, and, most importantly, travel funds for professional development[21].

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[20] Linda Imray and Audrey Middleton, "Public and Private. Marking the Boundaries", in *Gender: A Sociological Reader*, ed. Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[21] Susanne Kreutzer, "The Rockefeller Foundation and Professionalization of Nursing in West Germany", *Rockefeller Archive Center*, January 1, 2011, 2–3,

The Foundation's interwar efforts had a significant global impact. Its support for public health and nursing education reflected ongoing reforms in operational methods, aimed at enhancing local capacity through evidence-based education and public health initiatives. Romanian officials used American financial aid for post-war reconstruction, enabling health-focused organisations like the RF to promote public health and contribute to national development and scholarship[22]. One of its key aims was to establish nursing as a professional discipline during the interwar period by focusing on the creation of academically oriented nursing institutions and improving educational standards. Scholarships were developed to train a new elite group of nurses, including future professors and administrators, to achieve more than merely increasing the overall number of nurses, elevating nursing from a mere occupation to a scientific profession[23]. RF's work in Romania started in 1923 through collaborations with local leaders, including reformist justice minister Gheorghe Mârzescu, aimed at state-building initiatives and the rehabilitation of societies considered insufficiently modernised[24]. The timeline corresponds across the Atlantic with the establishment of the Yale School of Nursing, transitioning to a formal academic framework from an apprenticeship model[25].

This educational shift is also relevant in the context of this paper, as the Yale School of Nursing is frequently visited by Romanian nursing fellows. In a related discussion about women's roles in traditional professions, the Tailoring Academy aimed to professionalise tailors of either gender across Romania[26]. This initiative was much less successful

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https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/the-rockefeller-foundation-and-professionalization-of-nursing-in-west-germany.html, Accessed July 11, 2025.

[22] Doina Anca Cretu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania: In Quest of an Ideal, Stanford Studies on Central and Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2025), 2.

[23] Kreutzer, "The Rockefeller Foundation and Professionalization of Nursing in West Germany", 3.

[24] Cretu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*, 1–2.

[25] Mallory Locklear, "Once an Experiment, Yale School of Nursing Begins Its Second Century," *YaleNews*, November 7, 2023, https://news.yale.edu/2023/11/07/once-experiment-yale-school-nursing-begins-its-second-century, Accessed July 11, 2025.

[26] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 37.

and enduring than the professionalisation of nursing in efforts directed to practitioners who often lacked formal education. RF support arrived at a crucial time when Romania was undergoing complex educational reforms, spearheaded by visionary reformer and policymaker Spiru Haret in the late nineteenth century. Between 1924 and 1939, a series of normative acts unified primary, secondary, normal and private education[27]. The Romanian government worked with local communities and international organisations to establish normal schools for training educators and secretarial schools for administrative staff. The Ministry of Public Instruction standardised curricula across the newly unified regions. By the early 1920s, normal school programs included courses in pedagogy, child psychology, and history, along with supervised teaching seminars[28]. To stimulate the economy, administrations and private benefactors promoted vocational education. Bucharest, Cluj, and Iași offered courses in typewriting, shorthand, and accounting, attracting numerous women to pursue secretarial training, thus enhancing the status of clerical work[29]. Enrolment surged, with women making up nearly two-thirds of normal school students by the mid-1930s, driven by state policies that encouraged the hiring of female teachers in rural areas, as well as accommodating women to remain in their hometowns after marriage[30]. By the end of the decade, the overwhelming majority of students at Bucharest's secretarial schools were female, highlighting the demand for economic skills and greater acceptance of women in administrative roles[31]. However, political and social unrest hindered the establishment of a comprehensive legislative framework for all educational institutions. RF-backed individuals and institutions were no exception[32].

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[27] Simona Szakács, *Europe in the Classroom: World Culture and Nation-Building in Post-Socialist Romania* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 66–72, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60258-5.
[28] Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 112.
[29] Szakács, *Europe in the Classroom*, 70–72.
[30] Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 115.
[31] Szakács, *Europe in the Classroom*, 72.
[32] Ibid, 45–65.

RF acknowledged the significance of public health nurses in public health initiatives and allocated substantial funding to nursing projects, second only to those dedicated to public health. The Foundation's public health strategy allocated significant resources to nursing education, including scholarships to develop a skilled workforce deemed vital for implementing public health policies and tackling issues like epidemics or infectious diseases, as well as maternal and child health[33]. Between 1929 and 1940, RF allocated a total of 107,500 dollars[34] to nursing in Romania, just over a quarter less compared to the total funding it designated for public health initiatives during the same period[35]. Based on data collected up to August 2025, the percentage of direct scholarships awarded ranges from approximately eight to nearly thirty per cent, with an average of about eighteen per cent. Public Health Nursing is notably the most popular area of study, comprising almost half of the total, underscoring the significance of public health and nursing, as the two most funded areas. These fellowships were likely classed within the "Medical Assistance" category, distinct from the "Medical Sciences" and "Public Health" categories and suggesting that nurses received additional responsibilities. RF primarily supported nursing education and promoted the professionalisation of the field[36]. Because nursing grants pertain to "Medical Assistance", obtaining a clear, official statistical overview is challenging, stressing the need for critical analysis with an understanding of complex situations and themes. Nursing, much like fashion, beauty and health, becomes inherently interdisciplinary and connected to various facets of women's professional, personal, social, moral and spiritual lives.

Rockefeller funding extended beyond individual grants. RF also contributed to establishing and developing interwar Romania's health

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[33] Josep L. Barona, "The Rockefeller Foundation and the League of Nations: Public Health in Europe (1920-1945)", *História: Debates e Tendências* 21, no. 3 (August 20, 2021): (34–53) 35, https://doi.org/10.5335/hdtv.21n.3.12845.

[34] Calculated on 1940 exchange rates, this equivalates to around $2,468,392 in 2025, amounting to around 64,500,000 lei, around 10,720,226 RON in 2025.

[35] Violeta Emilia Plosceanu, "The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For A Crossed History of Social Reform and Science", *Rockefeller Archive Center*, January 1, 2008, 1.

[36] Sigmirean and C. Andraș, "Negocieri Academice Româno-Americane", 195–6.

infrastructure. Key institutional funding recipients included the Institute of Hygiene in Cluj with $6,110[37] in 1931 for expansion and equipment and the Local Health Department of Gilău with $15,310[38] from 1931 to 1936 for public health initiatives. Even more, the Institute of Hygiene in Bucharest received $110,000[39] for construction and equipment from 1934 to 1940, with the building almost completed when funding was interrupted by the war. A rural health centre nearby received $15,000[40] for demonstrations and practice for health officers and nurses in the early 1930s. It is safe to assume that these facilities were staffed with former or current Rockefeller nursing fellows. Nursing covered a large share of the funding, with similar amounts for building and equipping. The Nursing School in Cluj was allocated $10,000. RF was even more generous with the "Regina Maria" Nursing School, allocating $85,000 for building and equipment, $12,000 to support teaching staff salaries and organise practice fields from the mid-1930s until the early 1940s[41], and $500[42] for teaching materials in 1937. It also offered substantial support to sociological and demographic studies and research[43].

In the RF Records fund from 1909 to 1982, there are 105 fellowship cards for Romanian individuals, twenty-four of which were women[44]. Only two of these female fellows were part of the Sociology and Social

[37] Roughly $129,220 in 2025, amounting to around 1,026,480 lei, around 561,205 RON in 2025.
[38] Calculated on 1936 exchange rates, this equivalates to around $354,074 in 2025, amounting to around 2,082,224.5 lei, around 1,537,744 RON in 2025.
[39] Roughly $2,525,796 in 2025, amounting to around 60 million lei, around 10,969,534 RON in 2025.
[40] Roughly $370,921 in 2025, amounting to around 1,755,000 lei, around 11,610,911 RON in 2025.
[41] Roughly $1,858,811, amounting to around 80,750,000 lei, around 8,072,817 RON in 2025 for building, respectively around $262,420, amounting to around 11,400,000 lei, around 1,139,692 RON in 2025 for salaries.
[42] Roughly $11,162, amounting to around 87,500 lei, around 48,476 RON in 2025.
[43] Plosceanu, "The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania", 2.
[44] The Rockefeller Foundation, *Rockefeller Foundation records, SG 1.1, Series 100*. Rockefeller Archive Center. . Rockefeller Archive Center. October 19, 2024, https://dimes.rockarch.org/collections/SSRNQLkpCyPbAWAKCMeHBE, Accessed July 14, 2025.

Work (SS) division. In the research up to August 2025, there are two SS fellows, namely Xenia Constantin Costa-Foru[45] (with an unspecified PhD, studying Sociology and Social work in the US) and Christine Galitzi[46] (with a BA and MA from Columbia University, studying Social Legislation, Statistics, Population Problems in New York City as support for completing her PhD also at Columbia). Among the twenty-two women involved in medicine and science, more than a third worked in the Nursing department of the International Health Board or Division (IHB before 1927 / IHD afterwards). This was closely followed by fellows receiving Medical Sciences (MS) Nursing grants. Thirdly, the Nurse Division of Medical Education (DME) and Visiting Nurses grants shared fewer women. The central IHB/IHD department had only one fellowship card for a Romanian female fellow. Twenty of these cards also covered travel and tuition costs. The shortest grant lasted just under a month, while the longest was for two years, averaging one year in duration. Some grants also received extensions, ranging from one month to slightly over one year, averaging at seven months. The earliest grant was approved on 13 June 1924, while the earliest start was on 1 October the same year, and the latest grant termination occurred on 19 August 1938.

The total allocated to women's medical grants averaged at 19.266,00 dollars from 1924 until 1938[47]. The monthly stipends and fixed sums ranged from twenty to 700 dollars, with most daily stipends being 120 dollars. The highest grants with 40 or 120 dollars daily stipends totalled

[45] *Costa-Foru, Miss Xenia Constantin (Licence in Sociology, 1925, Pedagogy, 1927; Ph.D. June 1931) U. of Bucharest*, Fellowship Card (SS 133), 31071, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1931), Rockefeller Archive Center (SG 10.2, Subgrp 2, Humanities Fellows, Series 5, Romania).

[46] *Galitzi, Christine (Miss) (B.A., Paris, 1922; M.A., Columbia, 1924; Ph.D., Columbia, 1929)*, Fellowship Card (SS) 26051, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1926), Rockefeller Archive Center (SG 10.2, Subgrp 2, Humanities Fellows, Series 5, Romania).

[47] Due to exchange rates and inflation volatility, it is not feasible to reliably estimate the total value in Romanian lei, RON, or 2025 US dollars linked to earnings and costs, conversions will be provided only for single years.

on an average of 2,000 dollars for Eugenia Popa[48] (studying Nursing Education), 1,840 dollars for Smaranda Botez (studying Public Health Nursing), both in IHD Nursing in the USA, and 1,680 dollars for Elise Bucsan (MS Nursing, studying English and Public Health Nursing in the USA and Canada). On fixed stipend or lump sum grants, the highest awards went to Maria Pertia with 2,500 dollars (Nurse Visitor studying Nursing School Organization and performing Visits in the USA and Canada), Eugenia Zimita Costres with 2,366 dollars (Nurse DME, studying Public Health Nursing in the USA and Canada) and Eugenia Manoliu (DME, studying Bacteriology and Tuberculosis in Europe, in the USA and Canada) with 1,800 dollars. The highest grants understandably involved transatlantic travel. While the dollar amounts for individual stipends and total payments remained relatively stable, the actual value of each was significantly impacted by the economic turmoil of the era. Owing to the shift from postwar optimism to financial hardship, quickened by the Great Depression and the subsequent rise in political instability, a fellow receiving the same fixed stipend in the 1920s likely had greater purchasing power than those receiving it in the 1930s. Cards habitually added unpaid or self-funded holidays, activities and studies. The three most mentioned cities for studies and practice were in the United States, namely New York City, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The same occurred with the three most popular institutions, Yale University (Yale Nursing School), East Harlem Nursing and Health Services in New York and the Nursing School at Western Reserve University in Cleveland. The three most common study subjects or activities mentioned in the cards were Public Health Nursing, English language learning and hospital work. The most popular instructors were Edith Kathleen Russell from the Department of Public Health Nursing, University of Toronto, Ida de Fatio Butler from the American Red Cross and Miss Marion G. Howell from Western Reserve University.

Most RF fellows were unmarried, of whom eleven were never married. The rest was divided among four widows and one divorcee. Only two were married, while another two did not have that information mentioned in their fellowship cards. Of the twenty-two fellowships, two received more than one grant, namely Smaranda Botez and Maria Criste

[48] For consistency, this paper will use the name spellings found on the fellowship cards and other RF documents.

(Nurse DME and MS Nursing, both in Europe). The highest degrees obtained before the fellowship were diplomas, followed at a distance by Bachelor's degrees or Licenses. One fellow had incomplete studies, namely Elise Bucsan, studying Public Health Nursing in Cluj. The leading credentials obtained before the fellowship were unmentioned diplomas, followed by two fellows each with diplomas from the Florence Nightingale School in Paris, the Nursing School in Iași and licenses from unnamed institutions and the University of Bucharest. Other awarding institutions appeared only once, the Nursing School in Cluj (Elise Bucsan), alongside the Brâncoveneasa Nursing School near Bucharest, Harvard University and the University of Medicine in Bucharest (Florica Ciumetti-Bagdasar, IHD, studying Public Health, Child Hygiene, Paediatrics, Well Baby Clinics, Hospital Administration, Prenatal and Neonatal Problems, State Activities, Care of Dependents, School Health Work, Nursery School, Mental Hygiene Work, Medical Treatment and Recovery in the USA, for all three). The top subjects were General Nursing and Obstetrical Nursing. Most fellows were Public Health Nurses, followed by Instructors and then Directors or Lab Assistants. Among the several unspecified present institutions, most fellows were affiliated with the "Regina Maria" Nursing School or the Bucharest Health Centre. Assistant, Instructor and Assistant Director were most often included as prospective jobs, while the most common likely institutions were the "Regina Maria" Nursing School in Bucharest, the Nursing Schools in Cluj. The youngest fellow was Maria Moiseev, who was twenty-four years old in 1937 (IHD Nursing, studying English and Public Health Nursing in the US). The oldest was Valeria Tarina, at thirty-nine years old in 1929 (MS Nursing, studying Paediatric Nursing in Vienna). The average age was 31,5.

The Romanian women's story with the RF began with doctors. In June 1924, RF approved Aristia Damboviceanu's grant (DME, studying Biological Chemistry and Physiology in the UK and France) to study under Professor Fred Vlès at the University of Strasbourg and under Professor Gabriel Bertrand at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, prospective post-fellowship Chief of Biological Chemistry Laboratory at the Institute of Serology (University of Bucharest) after finishing her fellowship in November 1925. The card includes a note from Rockefeller officer Henry Oliver Ewing (HOE) from April 1926, where Damboviceanu

emphasises the benefits of her fellowship studies that have prepared her for greater responsibilities in her new role[49]. By the summer, twenty-year-old doctor Eugenia Manoliu, specialising in immunology and infectious diseases and Assistant in the Department of Hygiene at the University of Iași, was recommended for a Rockefeller grant by Romanian bacteriologist, immunologist, and parasitologist Mihai Ciucă. This grant would facilitate her transfer to the Department of General Pathology, where she would primarily study under immunologist and tuberculosis vaccine pioneer Albert Calmette at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. However, illness postponed her US portion of the fellowship until late December 1926. Upon arriving, she promptly married public health pioneer Dr. Ion Alexa[50]. Conversely, by the end of the decade, women represented almost thirty per cent of all university students overall, of which around twenty per cent of Medicine and more than half of Pharmacy University students were women[51]. As Manoliu began her studies at Harvard University in early 1927, an essential development for nurses occurred. On May 10, RF approved the first Romanian nurse fellowship for thirty-three-year-old Eugenia Zimita Costres, the only nurse married upon approval (Nurse DME, studying Public Health Nursing in the USA and Canada). Her fellowship belonged to a project supporting the School for Visiting Nurses in Cluj, working with two other nursing fellows to advance nursing education in Romania. Costres arrived in the United States in late July and divided her time between New York City, Washington D.C., and Providence, Rhode Island. A year later, she left for Romania to take up the position of Superintendent of Public Health Nurses and Assistant at the Public Health Nursing School in Cluj[52]. Around the same time when Costres returned to Romania[53], the

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[49] *Damboviceanu, Mlle Aristia (B.A. 1913, Lycee Craioval, Licencie, 1918, Faculty of Sciences, U. of Bucharest)*, Fellowship Card (DME) 24082, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1924), Rockefeller Archive Center, hereafter cited as RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 1–2.

[50] *Manoliu, Dr. Eugenia M.D.*, Fellowship Card (DME) 26082, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1926), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

[51] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 226.

[52] *Costres, Mme. Eugenia Zimita*, Fellowship Card (Nurse DME) 27214, Rockefeller Foundation Records, (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1927),

Foundation acknowledged Manoliu's recent scientific article on the pathogenic and immunological properties of a paratuberculous bacillus derived from Phleole grass[54]. Two years later, she was officially appointed to a permanent position as Laboratory Assistant in Hygiene at the University of Iași[55].

The most productive year for Romanian nurses was 1937, with four fellowships approved on 14 June, namely for Olimpia Alexandrescu (IHD Nursing, studying Paediatric Nursing in Vienna)[56], Alexandrina Ionescu (IHD Nursing in the US)[57], Maria Moiseev[58] and Smaranda Botez with a second IHD Nursing grant[59]. The last fellow examined by August 2025 was Aurora Sutianu (IHD Nursing, studying Nutrition, Dietetics and Public Health Nursing in the US), whose grant was approved in October 1937. She was preparing to study Nutrition and Dietetics in the United States with a focus on Public Health Nursing. In a memo to RF international health director Dr. George King Strode (GKS), RF public health nursing specialist Frances Elisabeth Crowell (FEC) noted that Eugenia Popa, Director of the "Regina Maria" Nursing School in Bucharest, aimed to develop a dietetic service for students at the State School of Nursing. Popa has proposed Sutianu for a fellowship

Rockefeller Archive Center, RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

[53] *Costres*, 3.

[54] *Manoliu*, 5.

[55] University of Iași, *Anuarul Universității din Iași. Anul școlar 1929-1930* (Iași: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Brawo", 1930), 45.

[56] Alexandrescu, Miss Olimpia (Graduate, Florence Nightingale School, Bordeaux,1931), Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 37232, Rockefeller Foundation Records, 1937.

[57] *Ionescu, Miss Alexandrina (Graduate,1930, School of Nursing, Jassy)*, Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 37233, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1937), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

[58] *Moiseev, Miss Maria (or Miss Maria Moiseiv) (Bachelor's Degree & Graduate of Bucarest Sch. Nursing, 1935)*, Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 37234, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1937), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

[59] *Botez, Mrs. Smaranda*, Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 32282, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1932), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

in Nutrition and Dietetics, with plans for Sutianu to become an instructor in science and dietetics after completing her studies[60]. Sutianu arrived in the United States a day before Botez ended her grant. She split her study and practice time between Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, the Boston Dispensary, New York Hospital, Yale School of Nursing, the Philadelphia Child Health Society, and the National Bureau of Home Economics in Washington. Sutianu also attended a Summer Session under the direction of Mrs. Mary S. Rose, devoted time to organising study in Nutrition 201 at Teachers College. Mary Beard received a message from Eugenia Popa regarding Frances Stern, the founder of the Boston Dispensary Food Clinic, who addressed Sutianu's needs. Drawing on her background in chemistry, biochemistry, and physiology, Sutianu focused on diet therapy, observed Stern's classes, and spent nearly three weeks working in the Diet Kitchen of a Boston hospital alongside Beatrice M. Diamond from Massachusetts General Hospital. She then completed diet therapy and nutrition courses at New York Hospital, facilitated by Anna P. Rynberger, the chief dietitian[61]. Sutianu was described as intelligent and engaged while at East Harlem Nursing and Health Service. Although she initially struggled to articulate her objectives, she embraced the program and showed a keen interest in nutrition. She was recognised for her broad public health perspective, active participation in discussions, valuable contributions, and friendly demeanour, leaving a positive impression on those around her. RF nursing program officer Mary Elizabeth Tennant (MET) informed FEC that Sutianu was expected to visit Europe at the end of her fellowship, but after travelling extensively in the US and feeling tired, she advised against this. Stern, who worked closely with Sutianu, noted her strong research interest but found it challenging to engage her in practical nutrition tasks, likely because she lacked hands-on experience. On her sailing form when leaving the US on 16 August 1938, Sutianu listed her current position as Teacher of Dietetics and Biological Chemistry at the

[60] *Sutianu, Miss Aurora* (Bachelor Degree,1928, Regina Maria School in Bucarest; Science Instructor Licence,1932, Univ. of Bucarest), Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 37235, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1937), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 1.
[61] Ibid, 2.

"Regina Maria" Nursing School. FEC also noted in October that she saw Sutianu in uniform, prepared to start working at the medical clinic[62]. In late December 1939, FEC noted that Sutianu had authored a book on nutrition, likely referring to a manual on nutrition and diet therapy she co-authored with Romanian physician and clinical dietitian Mircea Petrescu[63]. FEC continued that past fellows Smaranda Botez and Elise Bucsan were impressed by her lectures, indicating that she was fantastic at her job[64].

With the transatlantic connection severed due to Europe's descent into the point of no return, all payments from the RF were halted during the first months of the Second World War. This was accompanied by communication difficulties between the Foundation and its partners in Romania. The disruption affected areas beyond the Foundation's direct interests, notably impacting the fashion, health and beauty industries, other traditional realms of so-called "women's interest". Women on both sides of the Atlantic, especially those involved with *Vogue,* its subsidiaries, and the Parisian fashion sector, experienced similar interruptions in their work. The question that arises from all these developments is, with substantial support, why did Romania face such a significant nursing shortage during the Second World War?

'We Don't Need Nurse Education'

In early July 1928, Mary Beard (MB), Associate Director of the Rockefeller Foundation's International Health Division, reported that Eugenia Costres had raised concerns about nursing education in Romania, as noted in her fellowship card[65]. The recent Romanian fellow noted that "medical men from foreign countries", likely including those in Romania, often graduated their studies with only a superficial understanding of nursing, undermining the development of practical

[62] Ibid, 3–4.
[63] Mircea Petrescu and Aurora Sutianu, *Nutriție și dietoterapie – Alimente – Regimuri* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Jean Leon, 1940).
[64] *Sutianu*, 5.
[65] *Costres*, 3.

nursing education, which M.B. expressed a desire to improve[66]. Ten years later FEC reminded Dr. Ion Marinescu, the current Health Minister, that provisions had to be made for the returned fellow, Aurora Sutianu. Her fellowship had been requested by the previous Minister of Health and Social Security, Gheorghe Banu, who had served in poet and politician Octavian Goga's cabinet[67]. Despite financial and administrative challenges, women's employment in Romania showed modest but steady improvements as Greater Romania moved out of the flapper's age. The feminisation of elementary education and office work expanded women's paid employment opportunities beyond domestic service, despite men dominating secondary and technical education. Normal and secretarial school graduates established unions for women teachers and clerks to advocate for equal pay, pensions, and curriculum changes[68]. However, jobs now predominantly held by women were proportionately devalued, likely linked to the ongoing discussion of cognitive differences between men and women. Eugenicists used pseudo-scientific research to claim that women were unfit for leadership, thus confining them to subordinate roles. Marius Turda noted that Romanian eugenicists promoted male intellectual superiority by categorising intelligence on a spectrum that consistently favoured men in both scientific and cultural contexts[69]. This shift is especially visible in interwar women's fashion, illustrating the change in gender discourse from empowerment to compliance, especially in the loss of colour and diversity as a tool depersonalisation, most visible in the 1930s obsession with white-marble-pure Grecian voluptuous silhouettes[70].

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[66] Mary Beard, *Diary. 1928*, "Interviews", Rockefeller Foundation Records (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1928), Rockefeller Archive Center (Officers' Diaries, RG 12; Rockefeller Foundation records, officers' diaries, RG 12, A-E; Beard, Mary), 65.

[67] *Sutianu*, 4.

[68] Ionuţ-Constantin Isac, "Adult Education and Culture in the Interwar Romania: The Examples of Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Gusti", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie »George Barițiu« din Cluj-Napoca - Seria HUMANISTICA* XIII, no. 13 (2015): (125–38) 130.

[69] Turda, *În căutarea românului perfect. Specific național, degenerare rasială și selecție socială în România modernă*, trans. Marius-Adrian Hazaparu (Iași and Bucharest: Polirom, 2024), 240.

[70] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 101–4.

But this was not a new conundrum. On 24 January 1926, FEC visited Colentina and Colțea Hospitals in Romania, accompanied by paediatric specialist Titu P. Gane and his administrative paediatric deputy, Dr. Kaminski, alongside hygienist Emil Popp. The facilities had new white enamel beds and a classroom at each hospital, not sufficient to alleviate the cold and cheerless atmosphere. The former dining room at Colțea was converted into a classroom, while a new dining room and kitchen were built in the basement. Each hospital had about 50 students divided into two classes, with varying hours of theory provided, and Kaminski teaching practical nursing lessons. The Ministry allocated 360,000 lei[71] per year, with 60,000 lei for the salaries of forty doctors who taught there, amounting to 1,500 lei each just for teaching[72]. The remaining funds were used to improve facilities and purchase new furniture. Eforia (the Governing Board of Hospitals) provided board and lodging but paid nurses meagre salaries, ranging from 600 to 750 lei[73]. In contrast, domestic servants rivalled teacher-doctor salaries, earning between 1,200 and 1,600 lei[74], with Titu Gane recently increasing his servant's salary to 2,000 lei[75]. In other words, nurses earned approximately half the wages of domestic servants. All these were detailed in FEC's diary[76].

During her stay in Bucharest, FEC continued her visits to medical institutions. At Brâncoveneasa Hospital, she observed that conditions remained unchanged and noted recruitment issues stemming from low nurse salaries. She toured the School for Children's Nurses (Puericulture), newly under ministerial oversight, where orphans received secondary education and training in childcare, with plans to include non-orphans in the future. The Prince Mircea School had

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[71] For the total amount, roughly $1,636, amounting to around $29,717 and around 130,033 RON in 2025. For each doctor, roughly $6.81, amounting to around $124 and around 541 RON in 2025.

[72] Roughly $273, amounting to around $4,953 and around 21,672 RON in 2025.

[73] Roughly $2.73 to $3.18, amounting to around $50 to $58 and around 217 to 253 RON in 2025

[74] Roughly $5.45 to $7.27, amounting to around $99 to $132 and around 433 to 578 RON in 2025.

[75] Roughly $9.09, amounting to around $165 and around 722 RON in 2025.

[76] Frances Elisabeth Crowell, *Diary. 1926*, "Jan. 24th – Bucharest", Rockefeller Foundation Records (Rockefeller Foundation, 1926), Rockefeller Archive Center (Officers' Diaries, RG 12, RG 12, A-E, Crowell, F. Elisabeth), 2–3.

improved its program, extending it to two years and incorporating hospital experience. FEC also visited the Foyer for Delinquent Girls, which she defined as "Prostitutes, minors, committed by court", where she focused on hygiene and vocational skills despite health issues among the girls[77]. She was likely referring to the *Azilul "Sfânta Ecaterina" pentru fete căzute* ("St. Catherine" Asylum for Fallen Girls), established in the late nineteenth century to rehabilitate girls involved in prostitution or deemed at moral risk by the courts. At the Anglo-Romanian Children's Dispensary with free medical care to children from low-income families, managed by future Minister of Health Gheroghe Banu, she found that English nurses, who worked alongside Romanian physicians and students from Colentina Medical School, were undertrained and that the facility was in disrepair, but observed a well-run Lycée for Girls with a French-influenced curriculum[78].

The next day, FEC evaluated Romania's nursing and child welfare infrastructure in Cluj, including the School for Visiting Nurses. At a conference with Transylvanian public health inspectors, she noted gaps in the curriculum, especially in bacteriology, chemistry, and practical nursing, prompting the same Titu Gane to promise reforms. FEC met eighty dedicated visiting nurses from remote areas and reviewed their training, which included rotations in paediatric, maternity, surgical, and internal medicine clinics, as well as courses in hygiene and anatomy. She included a detailed presentation of the Nursing School, including an overview of the curriculum and its ongoing practice at the Contagious Clinic and Hospital, focusing on direct experience with infectious diseases and patient care. The curriculum spanned two academic years, divided into four semesters, gradually progressing from foundational knowledge to specialised training. Courses included maternal and child health, early childhood education, and the fundamentals of public health. Students completed clinical rotations, conducted assessments, and provided caregiving services. They also engaged in creating infant products, music for child development, managed documentation, involved families in health advocacy and attended multilingual public health conferences. Graduates were to emerge as esteemed caregivers, educators, and public health professionals, equipped with a

[77] Ibid, "Jan. 26th", 3–4.
[78] Ibid, "Jan. 27th", 4.

comprehensive curriculum that combined theoretical knowledge, practical training, creative expression, and community involvement. However, the inspection uncovered issues in the program, which Dr. Gane promised to address. FEC criticised gaps in the curriculum, with no bacteriology or chemistry foundation, limited practical nursing and rural experience, no tuberculosis-focused visits and a shortage of qualified teachers[79].

At Gane's Children's Clinic, she found clean but overcrowded conditions, where nurses earned only 200 lei[80] per month, in contrast to the better pay offered by the Office of Social Assistance. One nurse at this clinic earned only one-tenth of what Titu Gane's personal servant earned, despite both working under the same individual. The Asylum for Abandoned Children, possibly *Sfânta Ecaterina*[81], struggled with understaffing and inadequate equipment, while the Orthopaedic Hospital, despite its advanced tools, lacked proper ventilation. FEC also visited Princess Caragea, who managed a day nursery for 160 children, primarily funded through donations, with no plans for a new nursing school due to lost support, and the former nursing school reopened in 1925[82]. FEC was not an ordinary observer. After completing her nursing training in Chicago in 1895, she devoted her life to enhancing nursing education and standards[83]. When she visited Romania in 1926, she had more than thirty years of nursing experience.

By the end of the decade, RF clarified its resolve to invest in bringing Romanian nursing as close to its Western and transatlantic counterparts as allowed[84]. This attitude was not endemic to the medical field. In the

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[79] Ibid, "Jan. 28th", 4–6.

[80] Roughly $0.91, amounting to around $17 and around 72 RON in 2025.

[81] "Expoziție VR Muzeul Abandonului la fostul Leagăn de copii Sf. Ecaterina," *ARCUB – Centrul Cultural al Municipiului Bucureşti*, October 28, 2022, https://arcub.ro/proiect/expozitie-vr-muzeul-abandonului-la-fostul-leagan-de-copii-sf-ecaterina, Accessed 20 August 2025.

[82] Crowell, *Diary. 1926*, "Jan. 29th", 6.

[83] *Crowell, F. Elisabeth*, The Rockefeller Foundation, 2025, Rockefeller Archive Center (Rockefeller Foundation records, officers' diaries, RG 12, A-E), https://dimes.rockarch.org/collections/UgrkC9wFPqsJ23wZjFUdjZ, Accessed 17 August 2025.

[84] *Annual Report 1930*, Annual (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1930), Rockefeller Archive Center (Rockefeller Foundation records, Annual Reports Collection,

other field of traditional work for respectable women until well into twentieth-century modernity, namely fashion, Marthe Bibesco published a book of essays titled *Noblesse de Robe*, half of which first appeared in *Vogue Paris*, linking the world of *haute couture* with psychology, literature, social commentary, gendered and colonial stereotypisation. It would have likely been deemed consequential to early fashion theory had a man authored it, but it was ignored and forgotten as "feminine literature"[85]. On the other hand, a skincare manual by former Rockefeller fellow, eugenicist and venerologist Aurel Voina ten years later (IHD, studying public health administration, venereal disease control, organization of public health demonstrations, statistics, and eugenics, as special student in the US and Europe), was applauded in Romania as the ultimate health and beauty guide for all women[86]. Postwar changes in gender relations challenged traditional values and emerging nationalism, which justified excluding women from decision-making by promoting pseudo-scientific beliefs in their inferiority and limited roles as mothers. The rise of right-wing eugenics further marginalised women, emphasising the importance of "pure-bred" women in creating a new race. This narrative positioned nurses as professional women fulfilling traditional roles of care and support. It can be argued that nursing, even

1930), https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Report-1930-1.pdf, Accessed 18 August 2025.

[85] S. Andraș "Noblesse de Robe by Marthe Bibesco. Colonization, Decolonization and Recolonization through Fashion", in *Negocieri transatlantice. Cooperarea româno – americană în educație, cultură și arte / Transatlantic Negotiations. Romanian - American Cooperation in Education, Culture, and Arts*, ed. Sigmirean, S. Andraș, and C. Andraș (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2024), 122–55, https://doi.org/10.17613/6n6zb-z7a34; "Marthe Bibesco, Parisienne Par Excellence: Fashion, Gender and Identity in Noblesse De Robe, From Vogue to Bernard Grasset", in *The Enduring Influence of Paris in a Globalised World: Adaptation, Negotiation, Rejection*, ed. S. Andraș (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, upcoming); "Fashioning a Debate: Fashion, Gender and Literature in Noblesse de Robe by Marthe Bibesco in Context", *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art. Série Beaux-Arts* LXI/2024 (March 7, 2025): 41–64, https://doi.org/10.17613/1AMV1-0AM40.

[86] "Succesul răsunător al lucrării 'Îngrijirea Tenului' de Docent Dr. Aurel Voina", *Curentul*, July 11, 1936, Bucharest, 2.

in its modern form, particularly during the interwar period in Romania, continued to operate under the traditional veil of charitable monastic orders. Fellowship cards often left the section for "Children" or "Number of Children" empty or marked with dashes, in contrast to the sections for male fellows, which typically included numbers. Even those who were widowed or married at the time of fellowship approval did not provide any information about their children. While there is no direct evidence to confirm this, they were likely either childless or chose not to disclose information about their children, as revealing this could have negatively affected their chances of receiving the fellowship. As caring mothers for all, nurses appeared to be relieved of childbirth responsibilities.

Despite difficulties, nursing education and practice continued on its path. On January 24, 1935, Costres reported to MB about her positions since completing her fellowship. From 1929 to 1931, she organised nurses' work in Cluj, directed student fieldwork, and taught Public Health Nursing without an official title. She later returned to Timișoara as the Director of the Welfare Department in the health supervision office of Banat. In March 1934, she became the Director of the School in Iași, where she organised fieldwork and taught health in public schools alongside ten nurses and third-year students. The Chief of the Health Demonstration Centre in Iași assigned her to supervise the local nurses. At the time, she was at the *Institutul Surorilor de Ocrotire* (Institute of Nursing Sisters for Care and Protection) in Iași[87]. The Director at that time was Eugenia Popa, who held the position from 1929 until the end of her RF fellowship in September 1936, when she became the Director of the "Regina Maria" Nursing School. GKS likely met her during his visit to Iași in 1933 at the inauguration of the Malaria Pavilion at the Socola Hospital, also reported in the local press[88], which may have prompted him to recommend her for an RF fellowship.

In February 1937, the Romanian *Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette)* reported in Article 106 that the 21 June 1933 agreement between the Romanian State and the RF remained unchanged. References to the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Social Welfare, henceforth referred to as the Ministry of the Interior. The Institute of Demography and Census

[87] *Costres*, 3.
[88] C. Vlad, "Inaugurarea pavilionului de malarie dela Socola. Vizita delegatului Institutului Rockefeller", *Opinia*, Iași, March 2, 1933, 3.

moved to the Central Institute of Statistics and would continue its work with the Foundation's support for materials and personnel. The article interestingly noted that resources should be used only for their intended purposes[89]. A few months later, after the passing of John Davison Rockefeller, former RF fellow Sabin Manuilă (DME, studying Hygiene in the US), then Central Institute of Statistics Director, published an article in the conservative daily newspaper *Timpul*, half eulogy and half overview of RF activities in Romania. Manuilă highlighted its collaboration with national health and scientific authorities, particularly its support for the Institute of Hygiene and efforts to improve demographic and medical statistics. RF helped establish the Central Institute of Statistics through material support and organisational expertise. He mentioned that training courses for doctors, hygienists, and statisticians were organised, led by American and European specialists sent by the RF. He emphasised the Foundation's support for nursing education in Romania, which included assistance for nursing schools and the training of healthcare personnel according to international standards. He concluded that RF contributed to professionalising the healthcare system and enhancing public services. To address potential criticisms of its intentions, Manuilă affirmed that RF activities were deeply scientific and humanitarian, as it established solid foundations in public health, medical statistics, and professional training, thereby contributing to the country's social and economic progress[90]. By June, several former RF fellows, Eugenia Popa, Florica Ciumetti-Bagdasar, Alice Deleanu and Smaranda Botez, were asked to participate as members of the American Institute committee in Bucharest. The Institute was also set to collaborate in events and personnel with the *Amicii Statelor Unite* (The Friends of the United States) Society, also in Bucharest[91].

RF continued their activity in Romania with the same attention and energy. In the entry dated April 13, 1939, in MET's diary, it was noted

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[89] Regatul României, "Capitolul III. Convențiunea cu Fundația Rockefeller", *Monitorul Oficial* Partea 1, no. 41 (February 19, 1937): 1550.

[90] Sabin Manuilă, "Fundația Rockefeller în România", *Timpul*, Bucharest, June 11, 1937, 1, 3.

[91] "Adunarea generală a soc. „Amicii Statelor-Unite"," *Epoca*, Bucharest, June 5, 1937, 1. "Activitatea soc. „Amicii Statelor Unite" și „Institutul american"", *Curentul*, Bucharest, June 6, 1937, 2.

that John H. Janney, a U.S. medical advisor and officer at the RF, highly valued Elise Bucsan's work on the study of scarlet fever and encouraged Eugenia Popa to support her. He also expressed disapproval of the nursing service organised by Smaranda Botez in Bucharest, believing it deviated from essential nursing principles and emphasised the importance of assisting Bucsan in her work with Popa. Eugenia Costres was recognised for her success as the Director of the School of Nursing in Iași[92]. This diary entry was mentioned in all the fellowship cards of the nurses above[93] except for Popa, whose fellow correspondence had been discarded in 1936[94]. Bucsan has been associated with Popa since January 1939 at the "Regina Maria" Nursing School and reconfirmed her affiliation in April 1940[95].

A critical examination of the gendered aspects of women's work provides valuable insights into their representation and significance in the negotiations surrounding women's emancipation and the patriarchal system in interwar Romania. This analysis challenges preconceived notions about women's intellectual, professional, and technical abilities. It also emphasises how the widespread dismissal of professions traditionally associated with women, as well as the trivialisation of topics such as fashion, health and beauty, led the Romanian state to underestimate the importance of nurses in both the medical field and society. This exploration of the limited Romanian-American negotiation of medical education and practice reveals the intrinsic connection between health, beauty, and the fashion industry reflected in interwar propaganda targeting women and broader social strata within Romanian society during that time. As director of the "Regina Maria" Nursing School, Eugenia Popa, in her reinvented career as a nurse, despite

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[92] Mary Elizabeth Tennant, *Diary. 1939*, "New York. 13 April 1939", Rockefeller Foundation Records (Rockefeller Foundation, 1939), Rockefeller Archive Center (Officers' Diaries, RG 12, S-Z, Tennant, Mary Elizabeth), 82.
[93] *Botez*, 4; *Bucsan, Mrs. Elise*, Fellowship Card (MS Nursing) 29222, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1929), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 4; *Costres*, 3.
[94] *Popa, Miss/Dr. Eugenia (Diploma in Medicine, Faculty of Medicine in Jassy and Cluj)*, Fellowship Card (IHD Nursing) 27154, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1936), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 2.
[95] *Bucsan*, 4.

earning her medical diploma in 1923, Eugenia Popa was automatically referred to as "Miss", corrected by pen with "Dr.", reflecting the era's gendered professional expectations[96]. Her Rockefeller fellowship from 1934 to 1936 averaged at 2,000 dollars[97] over two years, significantly less than the 1,469-dollar[98] fellowship awarded to Voina for just one year in 1927[99]. Even accounting for inflation, Popa's more extended fellowship offered considerably less financial support, highlighting the disparities in institutional support for male and female Romanian scholars with M.D. degrees[100]. But this does not automatically suggest that the line was drawn solely on the American side. RF based its assessments and awards on officer reports, but the actual selection of potential fellows primarily took place within Romanian institutions. And the relationship between the Romanian state and nursing education was, at best, complicated. The Foundation's relationship with lead eugenicist Iuliu Moldovan significantly influenced the development of eugenics and sociology in interwar Romania[101]. Moldovan is frequently mentioned in Rockefeller diaries and fellowship cards as an intermediary between the emerging Romanian nursing system and the Foundation's initiatives. Eugenicist Aurel Voina was also crucial in shaping women's fashion, beauty, and health. Eugenics in interwar Romania was a multidisciplinary effort linked to social medicine, nationalist modernity, and political radicalism, stressing women's importance in a healthy society. It relied on international institutions like the RF to build academic and institutional infrastructures. Despite the scientific and social academic interest in eugenics, spearheaded by individuals like Voina, Nicolae Vătămanu, and Constantin Ion Parhon, institutional momentum was difficult to maintain. The language became more aggressive as it stopped disguising itself behind health and aesthetics.

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[96] *Popa*, 1.
[97] Roughly 271,900 lei, amounting to around $4,625 and around 20,088 RON in 2025.
[98] Roughly 245,541 lei, amounting to around $27,140 and around 117,868 RON in 2025.
[99] *Voina, Dr. Aurel*, Fellowship Card (IHD) 27154, Rockefeller Foundation Records, 1927.
[100] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 127–9.
[101] Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania*, 60–1.

The effort to "educate" women intensified, and the promotion of eugenics grew more political, aligning seamlessly with far-right rhetoric as the 1930s advanced.

Although no RF nursing fellowship cards address eugenics or related issues in the planned or implemented curricula, they do emphasise public health education and practice, which could potentially be informed or include eugenics at least partially For instance, in June 1937, GKS reported on the ongoing tension between the quality of nursing education and the workforce needs in Romania, calling for a long-term plan to address these issues, especially during times of change and shortages[102]. Specifically, GKS mentioned that Eugenia Popa and then-Health Minister Gheorghe Banu had conflicting views on launching the "Regina Maria" Nursing School. Popa stressed the need for strategic planning and high-quality training, while Banu favoured rapid expansion[103]. In the following spring, GKS noted that FEC was pleased with the Nursing School and Health Minister General Nicolae Marinescu. However, the Dean, Dumitru Mezincescu, had not addressed the concerns regarding the location of the Health Centre, even after receiving one million lei[104] from the city. This situation is particularly noteworthy because his son, Mircea Mezincescu, was a Rockefeller fellow (IHD, studying Biochemistry in the US and Scotland) from September 1935 to October 1936[105], receiving a monthly stipend of 200 dollars[106]. His stipend was higher than the maximum stipends awarded to female Rockefeller fellows across academic fields studied by August 2025. Conversely, the

[102] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 127.

[103] George King Strode, *Diary*, "Rumania", Rockefeller Foundation Records (New York: Rockefeller Foundation, 1937), Rockefeller Archive Center (Officers' Diaries, RG 12; Rockefeller Foundation Records, Officers' Diaries, RG 12, S–Z; Strode, George King), June 5, 1937, 94.

[104] Roughly $7,224, amounting to around $164,697 and around 715,281 RON in 2025.

[105] *Mezincescu, Dr. Mircea D.* (B.S. 1921, Liceul Național, Jassy; M.S. 1925, Univ. of Jassy, Doctor of Science, Univ. of Strasbourg, 1934 France), Fellowship Card (IHD) 35139, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1936), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23).

[106] Roughly $4,625 in 2025, amounting to around 27,190 lei, around 20,088 RON in 2025.

gross median income in the US in 1936 [107] was nearly 40 dollars per month[108], while the average monthly salary in Romania for the same year[109] was approximately 325 lei[110], placing Mezincescu during his fellowship among the earning elite on both sides of the Atlantic. By 1941, Romanian RF fellow nurses completed fellowships in the United States, Canada, and Europe, upon returning, they joined the top nursing schools in Bucharest, Cluj, and Iași. With RF support, they promoted a vision of nursing that integrated clinical practice and public health, which greatly influenced healthcare planning in the postwar era as the Second World War was becoming an unavoidable reality. Yet it was not enough.

Second World War and Beyond

The nursing school in Iași had been bombed by the Soviets against the Romanian-German forces, and it was evacuated in late 1944, but it continued its activities in Arad, near Romania's western border[111]. In October 1945, the MET recorded contact with Maria Criste, marking the last entry on her fellowship card. The Public Health Nurses School in Cluj was evacuated in August 1940 due to the Second Vienna Award, which resulted in Romania losing two-thirds of Transylvania. Upon returning in August 1945, Criste informed RF that all teaching materials had been lost, making replacement nearly impossible. She requested assistance from the Red Cross Headquarters in Washington or from the Foundation itself[112]. The Nursing School in Iași had also returned to its

[107] Admin, "What Was the Average Salary in 1936?," *MassInitiative*, May 3, 2020, https://massinitiative.org/what-was-the-average-salary-in-1936/, Accessed July 13, 2025.
[108] Roughly $924 in 2025, amounting to around 5,339 lei, around 4,013 RON in 2025.
[109] Central Statistical Institute, *Anuarul statistic al României 1939 și 1940 / Annuaire Statistique de la Roumanie 1939 et 1940* (Bucharest: "Eminescu" Graphic Arts Institute, 1940), 344–5.
[110] Roughly $2.39, amounting to around $55 and 240 RON in 2025.
[111] Costres, 5.
[112] *Criste, Miss Maria*, Fellowship Card (MS Nursing) 32283, Rockefeller Foundation (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1932), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 2.

original building by early 1946. In March, Costres reported that the school had sustained severe damage, but repairs were beginning. The incredibly low salaries for nurses made it challenging to attract students. It is then safe to assume that nurse salaries have either not been recalculated to inflation in two decades since FEC's diary entry above, or that the payments were even lower than their 1926 equivalents. During the war, the Iași school collaborated with the Red Cross, likely assisting in its evacuation to Arad. Despite these challenges, Costres, also in her last card note, assured the Foundation that both the staff and students remained healthy and enthusiastic about their work[113]. In June, Elise Bucsan, in her previous card note, confirmed she was still working as a Public Health Nursing instructor at the "Regina Maria" Nursing School, presumably still under the leadership of Eugenia Popa. In August, Smaranda Botez wrote to MET, stating that she had been working with Health Centres as Chief Nurse of Bucharest since 1940 and requested literature[114]. In February, Botez wrote again to request publications from Tennant. She received a reply through U.S. Army Captain J.M. Wassmann, stationed at Army Post Office (APO) 777 with the Allied Control Commission in Romania. In late July of the following year, Botez informed Tennant, in her last fellowship card note, that she was working at the Institute of Hygiene in Timișoara, where she would introduce students from the School of Public Health Nurses to fieldwork[115].

Following 1945, political turmoil during the gradual establishment of what would soon be known, after King Michael's abdication in 1948, as the People's Republic of Romania disrupted many aspects of Romanian civil society, including healthcare. But the transition from a few years of respite after extreme-right-wing authoritarianism alongside Nazi Germany was not immediate, and pro-Western discourse was still a common thread. Around the same time, periodical publications with a variety of interests from literature[116], culture and politics to eugenics continued to publish historical accounts of the achievements of the Rockefeller Foundation, focusing on RF efforts in Romania. Yet women,

[113] *Costres*, 5.
[114] *Busan*, 4–5.
[115] Ibid, 9.
[116] Popa, "Fundația Rockefeller în slujba omenirii".

and particularly nurses, are absent. The 1946 article published in the eugenic-centred magazine dedicated to health and beauty, *Trup și Suflet*, led by medical historian, doctor, and chronicler of Bucharest, Nicolae Vătămanu, only mentioned doctors (presumably read in a male key) as fellows[117]. By late 1946, RF officially expressed its intentions to resume its activities in Romania, formally stated at an international congress held in Paris and syndicated in the national Romanian press[118]. But this plan did not materialise as the summer of 1948 introduced a series of nationalisation laws in Romania, which directly affected commercial, industrial, and agricultural companies, along with health and educational institutions that would pave the way to the collectivisation of agriculture in the coming decade[119].

Romania's transition to autocracy began even before the Communist takeover. Keith Hitchins observed that in 1938, both internal and external pressures from King Carol II influenced the political elites, allowing him to establish a Royal Dictatorship, marking the end of Romania's fifty-year experiment with democracy[120]. Historian Florin Müller noted that the Vienna Award of August 30, 1940, allowed Ion Antonescu to take power and establish a national-legionary state, as Carol II's Royal Dictatorship was only threatened by the uniting of political opposition following the French Occupation[121]. The secret Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact of August 23, 1939, already placed Bessarabia under Soviet control. In June 1940, Moscow pressured Romania to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, resulting in the evacuation of nearly one million people. Romania also lost Northern

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[117] "Fundația Rockefeller. O instituție de binefacere", *Trup și Suflet* 11, no. 296 (1 August 1946): 5, 15.

[118] Grigore Graur, "Fundația Rockefeller vrea să-și reia activitatea în România – Ecouri importante dela un congres international", *Adevărul*, Bucharest, December 29, 1946, 1–2.

[119] Ștefan Borcea, "Naționalizarea la români. Industria confiscată, oameni lăsați fără agoniseală și aruncați în stradă", *Historia*, July 27, 2015, https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/nationalizarea-la-romani-industria-confiscata-2307913.html, Accessed 18 August 2025.

[120] Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 168.

[121] Florin Müller, *Statul national-legionar (septembrie 1940 – ianuarie 1941)* (Bucharest: Corint, 2025), 32.

Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria shortly after, significantly reducing Greater Romania's territory[122]. On 4 September 1940, King Carol II abdicated in favour of his son, Michael I, as Romania aligned with Berlin under Marshal Ion Antonescu, seeking to regain lost territories. Following the coup, Antonescu and the Iron Guard established the National Legionary State. On 23 November, Romania officially joined the Axis powers, contributing to the German war effort, which strained relations with the UK and the US. In December, Britain declared war on Romania, and shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Romania declared war on the United States. The US did not respond with military action until June 1942[123]. In a curious historical echo of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, on 23 August 1944, King Michael overthrew Ion Antonescu, ending Romania's alliance with the Axis powers and signing an armistice with the Allies that allowed Soviet forces to enter uncontested. Under Soviet pressure, Prime Minister Petru Groza established a Communist-dominated government in March and won the manipulated November 1946 elections despite significant fraud. Finally, on 30 December 1947, Communist authorities forced King Michael to abdicate and declared Romania a People's Republic, establishing single-party rule[124]. The Kingdom of Romania ceased to exist. Enter the stage, the People's Republic of Romania. However, the regime change did not disrupt Romanian eugenics and anthropology, which shifted the focus of hygiene from racial considerations to national health[125]. Nurses continued to be silent voices, as they have always been in Romania.

In the newly formed republic, the Ministry of Education was granted complete authority to close foreign schools, emphasising that affected Romanian citizens, whether teachers or students, could move to state schools[126]. This decision was part of a larger initiative, coupled with

[122] Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, 198–9.
[123] Ibid, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994), 455–74.
[124] Dennis Deletant, *Romania Under Communist Rule*, 2nd ed. (Iași and Portland: Center for Romanian Studies in cooperation with the Civic Academy Foundation, 1999), 30–51.
[125] Turda, *În căutarea românului perfect*, 237.
[126] Ministerul Învățământului, "Decret nr. 159 din 22 iulie 1948 referitor la școlile străine din Republica Populară Română," Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române, July 22, 1948, Monitorul Juridic,

nationalisation measures aimed at nationalising churches and communities that supported various educational institutions[127]. By April 1949, additional sectors, including pharmacies and medical laboratories, were also nationalised[128]. Institutions such as the Dr. Antoniu Sanatorium in Bucharest were expropriated and designated as public utilities[129]. Communist Romania implemented the Semashko system, financed through the state budget with government oversight via a centralised planning system. A key aspect of this system was that the state held a monopoly on health services, which the government owned.

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http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-159-din-22-iulie-1948-referitor-la-scolile-straine-din-republica-populara-romana-emitent-ministerul-invatamantului-publicat-n-35193.html, Accessed 18 August 2025.

[127] Ministerul Învățământului, "Decret nr. 176 din 2 august 1948 pentru trecerea în proprietatea Statului a Bunurilor bisericilor congregațiilor, comunităților sau particularilor, ce au servit pentru funcționarea și întreținerea instituțiilor de învățământ general, tehnic sau profesional (Text corectat conform rectificării apărută în Monitorul Oficial Nr. 204 din 3 Septemvrie 1948)" Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române, August 3, 1948, Monitorul Juridic, http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-176-din-2-august-1948-pentru-trecerea-in-proprietatea-statului-a-bunurilor-bisericilor-congregatiilor-comunitatilor-sau-particularilor-ce-au-servit-pentru-functionarea-si-intretinerea-institutiilor-de-invatamant-19336.html, Accessed 18 August 2025.

[128] Prezidiul Marii Adunări Naționale, "DECRET nr. 134 din 2 aprilie 1949 pentru naționalizarea unităților sanitare ca: farmaciile urbane reședințe și nereședințe de județ și centre importante muncitorești, laboratoare chimico - farmaceutice, drogherii medicinale și laboratoare de analize medicale," in *Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române, no. 15 bis*, Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române, May 2, 1949, Monitorul Juridic, http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-176-din-2-august-1948-pentru-trecerea-in-proprietatea-statului-a-bunurilor-bisericilor-congregatiilor-comunitatilor-sau-particularilor-ce-au-servit-pentru-functionarea-si-intretinerea-institutiilor-de-invatamant-19336.html, Accessed 18 August 2025.

[129] Ministerul Sănătății, "Decret nr. 164 din 30 iulie 1948 pentru declararea de utilitate publică și expropriere a Sanatoriului Dr. Antoniu, situat în București, str. Arh. Mincu Nr. 7", Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române, July 30, 1948, Monitorul Juridic, http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-164-din-30-iulie-1948-pentru-declararea-de-utilitate-publica-si-expropriere-a-sanatoriului-dr-antoniu-situat-in-bucuresti-str-arh-mincu-nr-7-35195.html, Accessed 18 August 2025.

Health personnel were salaried officials, and the population had equal access to these health services[130]. This system slowly developed into a more pluralistic, decentralised network after Romania's 1989 Revolution. Still, the plight of nurses in terms of personnel, payment and working hours has echoed the interwar situation well into the 2010s[131] and remains a valid concern to this day. Thus began the era of the Communist Romanian 'new woman', building from the same clay as the interwar 'new woman', albeit crafted at the extreme ends of the ideological spectrum[132].

After the Communist takeover, despite the impossibility of resuming their Romanian efforts, RF monitored their fellows, adding sporadic notes about their fates to cards, in addition to the direct references found in officer diaries. These pursuits faced logistical and geographical challenges, brought about by the regime change itself and the 1948-1949 nationalisation measures detailed above. As RF-backed institutions became state-owned and nursing schools fell under Ministry of Health oversight, Western (mainly US)-trained professionals faced ideological scrutiny. They were often reassigned to lesser roles or demoted to technical instructors. For example, the final note in Eugenia Manoliu's card, dated October 1, 1950, stated that the fellowship directory at Harvard University listed Dr. E. M. Alexa at the Liceul Național (National High School) in Iași, a significant downgrade from his university academic and laboratory leadership roles. There was no further information available about Manoliu herself[133]. Fellowship cards were updated many decades later. For example, the full beginning date of 22 August was handwritten onto the card of Maria Secrier (MS Nursing in Poland and France), who had studied nursing in Poland, for

[130] Oana Miron, "O radiografie a sistemului de sănătate din România (A radiography of the health system in Romania)," *Polis – Revistă de Științe Politice*, New Series, VIII, no. 1 (27) (2019): 1, http://revistapolis.ro/documente/revista/2020/1(27)/Oana%20Miron-converted.pdf, Accessed 18 August 2025.
[131] Cristian Vladescu and Victor Olsavsky, "Migration of Nurses: The Case of Romania", *Management in Health* XIII, no. 4 (2009): 12–16, https://doi.org/10.5233/mih.2009.0026.
[132] S. Andraș, *The Women of 'Little Paris'*, 133.
[133] *Manoliu*, 5.

the year 1929, as late as 5 June 1967[134]. This correction highlights ongoing attention to RF fellows, including women and specifically those in nursing, yet another potential research avenue in Romanian studies, following the post-1948 fates of RF fellows, as they adapted to or were excluded from the newly formed People's Republic.

While Romania was sinking deeper into Stalinist autocracy, the rest of non-Communist Europe continued to develop its nursing education and practice. Building on the success of the interwar Rockefeller nursing education model, similar schools were established worldwide, including the School of Nursing at Heidelberg University Medical School, founded in 1953 with the specific purpose of creating a new nursing elite[135]. Since the Great War, RF has made significant investments in global nursing infrastructure, curriculum development, and fellowships for women educators. These initiatives created a foundation that either endured or was adapted under state control, as observed in Romania. Analysing official documents from the RF and Romania, along with reports from the Romanian press, helps illustrate the relationship between Western nursing models and the shift of the People's Republic of Romania towards the Soviet-style Semashko framework. Despite ideological constraints, the pedagogical innovations and leadership structures introduced by RF fellows continued to shape Romania's nursing schools and public health initiatives. The international connection opens a valuable avenue for future research into the broader dynamics of medical professionalisation during the Cold War and beyond, focusing on women and their work. This demonstrates how a philanthropic ethos persisted even within an authoritarian regime. Or to paraphrase US military aviation officer and covert operative Robert William Bishop alongside Anglo-American espionage agent Edward Stanley Crayfield writing about Romania until 1948, while global

[134] *Secrier, Miss Maria*, Fellowship Card (MS Nursing) 29225, Rockefeller Foundation Records (The Rockefeller Foundation, 1929), RAC (SG 10.2, Nursing Travel Grants since 1930, Series 31, Box 23), 1.
[135] Kreutzer, "The Rockefeller Foundation and Professionalization of Nursing in West Germany", 1.

nursing education advanced westward, Romania moved eastward, toward Moscow[136].

Conclusion

Interwar Romanian nursing education on a modern three-year model faced challenges from its inception despite support from organisations like the Rockefeller Foundation. Misconceptions about women's roles in medicine significantly contributed to this issue. International efforts to establish a nursing education system in Romania encountered challenges due to the responses of local authorities and societal perceptions. The patriarchal values of interwar Romania often trivialised professions oriented towards women, leading to an underappreciation of the importance of nurses in the medical act. This is also a likely reason for the nurse shortage Romania faced during the Second World War. Interwar propaganda targeted women by emphasising the connection between health, beauty, and fashion, highlighting the subtle sexism and outright misogynistic policies that historically devalued women's professions, including nursing. Analysing lesser-known female Rockefeller fellows functioning in a liminal space between conflicting gendered philosophies who aimed to become modern nurses, as well as exploring little-known primary materials from its archives and other public sources from interwar Romania, can expand the understanding of gender discourse during that period, informing future discussions and initiatives in academia and beyond.

[136] Robert William Bishop and Edward Stanley Crayfield, *Russia Astride the Balkans* (New York: R. M. McBride, 1948), 287.